

THE
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
A STUDY

MANOMOHAN GANGULY

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*The Swami
Vivekananda
A study*

MANOMOHAN GANGULY
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‘We cannot look, however imperfectly,
upon a great man, without gaining
something by him. He is the
living light-fountain, which it is
good and pleasant to be near’.

—*Carlyle.*



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



publishers' note

This small book 'The Swami Vivekananda—A Study' written by Late Manomohan Ganguly, B.E. was first published in the year 1907, a few years after Swamiji's death. The author was then one of the young admirers of Swamiji, but his admiration was more critical than blind and therefore more sincere and abiding. The author was also a keen *Vedantist* and therefore a rational and a logical person, evidence of which we find in his approach to the ideas and ideals of Swamiji as developed in this book.

In the year 1962, when our country is observing Birthday Centenary of Swami Vivekananda, it is natural that many books and articles will be published discussing Swamiji's life and works, and we hope this little book written fifty-six years ago with its particular approach by a person who had the opportunity of coming into very close contact with the great saint, nay, of being looked as one of his sons, will be liked by Swamiji's Indian and foreign disciples although one may not agree with all the views expressed by the author.

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Since this publication is our first venture and since the subject matter itself is of great interest to a large number of people in India and abroad, we have tried to keep the price of the book as low as possible to cover the expenses to the barest extent only and we should be much encouraged if our venture is appreciated for its worth.

We thank all who have co-operated in bringing out the book in such a short time, particularly Shri Dakshina Ranjan Bose, News Editor, 'Jugantar', Shri Purnendu Prosad Bhattacharya, Editor, 'Nabanna', Sri Sadananda Banerjee and Shri Satya Banerjee. We are also obliged to Late Mrs. M. M. Ganguly who had suggested the publication of the book and had accorded all assistance. As she died only a few months back, she did not see its republication which we regret.

foreword

Swami Vivekananda stands out as an unrivalled champion of India's spiritual message to the world. No one Indian stirred overnight the imagination of the West as this great mystic. But if he was a mystic of the highest order, his practical idealism too was not of a lesser order. Truly has Swami Nikhilananda said that 'Swami Vivekananda is a unique phenomenon of our time'. Standing on the rostrum of the World Parliament of Religions this steel-nerved, golden-hearted and yellow-turbaned monk directly descending from the highest line of Vedanta as manifest in Shri Ramakrishna, Swamiji created ripples in the spiritual quest of man, hitherto unknown. Were his appeal of the traditional nature, it would not have been greeted with prolonged cheers. His brotherly call, unlike all formal addresses, struck the core of all souls,—or rather we should say the supreme soul that bound the eminently religious men and women who had assembled on that occasion. And this dramatic effect on a distinguished

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audience was responsible for winning universal applause, adoration and love for this highly realist monk. And the appeal of this drama was so sudden and so intense, that for once, perhaps even his contemporary Indians and fellow-travellers forgot that, a much longer and much more dramatic life was lying behind this world scene and what a suffering this unique man of God had undertaken to reach the desired spiritual height and to reach the message of this successful quest to the overseas brothers and sisters!

It was a pleasant surprise, therefore, to me when I came across a small, wonderful book 'The Swami Vivekananda—a Study' that gave the contents of Swamiji's life with deep scholasticity, understanding, devotion and out-spokenness. I would underline the word 'out-spokenness'. Shri Manomohan Ganguly, B.E., the learned author, while dealing with his subject with unusual clarity of vision has made no secret of his own views, on certain points, which are likely to be controversial. And therein lies the distinction of Shri Ganguly; he had the requisite erudition and modesty that is a condition precedent to the writing of spiritual biographies. As he himself says, in course of a highly readable introduction—'If we are asked, why we have chosen the life of Vivekananda as a fit subject of study, in preference to others, the only reply that we should give is that he dedicated his life, like Samson, to our regeneration. We do not set him up before our readers as an ideal famous for his flight in the unknown realm of original thought, and for revelation therefrom of

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some original truths to mankind. We do not admire our hero, as one who has put a rationalistic construction upon several of the most difficult texts of the *Vedas*, but we take him in a different light. His mode of thinking rather than his thought, his method of explaining rather than his explanation are what we admire. We know full well that no part of his religious system is a spiritual innovation or a revelation, here, in India, the Mother of Religions. He himself has disowned any claim to original thought; but his method of tackling spiritual or secular problems is wonderful. He was marked by a union of conservatism and progress, marching forward, not forgetting the past. Although we do not accord our implicit obedience to many of his ideas yet they are singularly original.' Written as early as the first decade of this century—precisely in the year 1907—this small book has an irresistible appeal for the readers. The appeal is all the more dynamic because of the contemporary character of the writing. The author had lived through that thrilling age of the wise who, in quick succession and as if with a pre-meditated plan, appeared in Bengal, and the magic spell of that unique saint Shri Ramakrishna and his grand torch-bearer, the author had almost witnessed with his near-contemporary vision. This fact surrounds this book with a sense of realism and directness that is seldom available in our biographical work. With Raja Ram Mohan Ray as the 'grand entrance' and Swami Vivekananda as the 'grand exist', the last century would ever be remembered as unique,—unique in almost all respect.

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The learned author also makes his entrance with historical correctness and in the first chapter we find the galaxy of sages, seers and scholars appearing on the scene, each with his significant reference. This is followed by a brief chapter on Narendranath's academic and youthful life which had enough events—an unusual power of concentration of mind and a golden voice—to signify the advent of a revolutionary religious leader, who was destined to change the course of India's history. Narendranath's first interview with the Master, his slow but inevitable transformation into what the Master had visualised in him, his initiation and resultant renunciation of the world, his multifarious penances, India-wide travel from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and the preparation—mostly inward—for the mission overseas are aptly and provokingly told by the author in the second chapter. But this was no easy job; the prospect of wherewithal for such a journey was gloomy. At this crucial moment Swamiji heard a voice—'Why are you not following your Guru's orders? Go, and discharge the task that he has imposed upon you'. This incident at once lifted him up and made him most firm in his conviction. Fired by this conviction Swamiji undertook a leap into the unknown. Just on reaching America he wrote to a friend how he had to fight through starvation, cold, hooting in the streets for his 'quaint dress'. And we know these same continental men showered their greetings on the Swamiji as soon they discovered in him a great saint, a great seer, a great lover and a great teacher of man. The American Press was full of boquets

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for his eloquence, culture and fascinating personality which gave U.S.A., 'a new idea of civilization'. From America to Europe this historical voyage completed in 1897 when the triumphant monk and prince among men returned to India in 1897. And soon after, the mission of service that he had foreseen and nurtured in his mind after Shri Ramakrishna's teachings, he established the Belur and Madras *Maths* (monasteries). But, alas, he was more needed by the creator of all men and yet in his youth Swamiji was removed by the unrelenting hand of death on July 4, 1902.

The subsequent pages of this unique book unfold this eloquent history with remarkable competence and sympathy. And to this are added some immortal quotations beaming with Swamiji where his restless zeal for the service of the man, for the service of those steeped in poverty, illiteracy and numerous other social evils like casteism etc. in an otherwise great land. His chief ideas have been expressed by the author in a manner which no Bengali, no Indian, nay no serious reader of any country and clime, should miss.

It required a great understanding and greater skill to incorporate Swamiji's life and message in so short a compass with so much appeal.

Dakshina Ranjan Bose,
News Editor,
'Jugantar.'

1962
Calcutta.

Member, Advisory Council,
Vivekananda Janmotsava Samiti.

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TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF MY DEAR UNCLE

KHAGENDRA NATH GANGULY,

*Who initiated me into the first principles of
Brahmacharya,*

Who is the guide of my youth,

THIS PAMPHLET

*With the warmest feelings of affection
Is respectfully inscribed.*



preface

The purpose of this book is clearly explained in the first chapter. Its aim is to give within a small compass, a general outline of the elements in the life of the Swami Vivekananda that constituted his greatness. Many important facts have been passed over adventently, for the aim of the book is to serve as an incentive to the study of his life and doings. It is published as introductory to a more complete and systematic biography to be undertaken by an abler hand. There is a whisper in certain quarters that none but the disciples of Vivekananda has any right to pass comments on his life. This is utterly erroneous; for, Vivekananda's teachings are no longer confined to the narrow bounds of any organisation; his life is a national heritage, a national treasure.

The so-called admirers of the Swamiji should remember the memorable words of Mr. Leslie Stephen, 'So long as a man says sincerely what he thinks, he tells us something worth knowing.'

Calcutta, 1907.

Manomohan Ganguly.



introduction

We need not begin with an apology, the usual preface to an article, although we hold with Sister Nivedita that 'the moment has not come for gauging the religious significance of Vivekananda. Religion is a living seed. His sowing is but over; the time of harvest is not come yet'.

We pay our heart's allegiance to the Swami Vivekananda, not because he was a profound scholar, or a thinker, or an exponent of the Vedanta, or a great religious teacher, if we are permitted to use the expression, or an apostle of truth and harmony, but because he had a fascinating personality which spread a graceful halo around it, and which has left a permanent impression on our minds, never to be obliterated in the ceaseless flow of time.

If we are asked, why we have chosen the life of Vivekananda as a fit object of study, in preference to others, the only reply that we should give is that he dedicated his life, like Samson, to our regeneration. We

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do not set him up before our readers as an ideal famous for his flight in the unknown realm of original thought, and for revelation therefrom of some original truths to mankind. We do not admire our hero, as one who has put a rationalistic construction upon several of the most difficult texts of the *Vedas*, but we take him in a different light. His mode of thinking rather than his thought, his method of explaining rather than his explanation are what we admire. We know full well that no part of his religious system is a spiritual innovation or a revelation, here, in India, the Mother of religions. He himself has disowned any claim to original thought; but his method of tackling spiritual or secular problems is wonderful. He was marked by a union of conservatism and progress—marching forward not forgetting the past. Although we do not accord an implicit obedience to many of his ideas yet they are singularly original; one thing which we note with wonder is his capacity of grasping the most knotty points of almost every branch of thought. There are many whose depth of knowledge in any particular sphere of thought is far more profound than that of the Swamiji, but the peculiarity with him was that his mind had depth as well as extent.

The different branches of thought are so correlated to each other and hence have such a direct or indirect bearing on each other that, extent of knowledge should not be overlooked. It was this extent of thought that made him discuss the social, political, or spiritual problems from a scientific point of view.

INTRODUCTION

The life of Vivekananda is of varied interest; it presents such different aspects that we seem to lose our breath when we consider them. He towers above all in solitary grandeur, but this grandeur, instead of dazzling us blind, delights our eyes with a soft mellowed light. Vivekananda's life may seem an apparent paradox, to an ordinary people; but this paradox, if carefully analysed, would be proved as perfectly homogeneous, and consistent as possible. Vivekananda's was an organic mind.

It is natural that Vivekananda's life has not as yet taken a firm hold on the public mind; but it is destined to do so, at no distant future; for we see the spirit of Vivekananda, here and there, in Swadeshi cult, and literature, however misconstrued that spirit may be. Is it not too much to expect his spirit manifesting itself in its full form when the nation is not yet educated to catch it? The ideas which Raja Ram Mohan Ray propagated about a century ago have not as yet asserted themselves fully. This is a law of nature. Who can override this?

the background

The last century had a grand entrance, and an equally grand exit; its existence was ushered in by Raja Ram Mohan Ray, a true prince, according to Prof. Max Muller, and its passing away was heralded forth by Keshub, Dayananda, Paramhansa and Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and it was reserved for Justice Ranade and Swami Vivekananda to toll its death-knell, themselves following it in quick succession.

More than a quarter of a century ago the country was in a ferment, and the pulse of the nation had begun to beat quickly in unison with the new ideas and thoughts that indicated the advent of a new era; it was a new era indeed, alike in the domain of spirituality, politics and literature.

Keshub Chunder Sen's influence was then in full vigour. Ramakrishna Paramhansa's influence had just then begun to be felt; it was Keshub and his followers, to my mind, who brought Paramhansa to the gaze of the public; Ramakrishna had already begun to

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exercise his influence upon Keshub, for we see the latterday utterances of Keshub to be tinged with the ideas of Paramhansa; so we infer that Ramakrishna Paramhansa's influence was not insignificant in the religious movement that was then going on. Through the agency of Paramhansa, we believe, that the Motherhood of God was introduced in the New Dispensation.

It has been remarked that in the religious world there was much ferment; in the N. W. P. and the Punjab, Swami Dayananda Saraswati was preaching his new doctrines. In Bengal, Maharshi Debendra Nath and Keshub Chunder Sen were working enthusiastically; many religious societies on Hinduism were organised and pulpit lectures introduced. The editor of the *Nabya Bharat* remarked in his journal in 1893, if we remember aright, that religion was the all-absorbing theme of that period; religious books were published by cartloads, and religious dramas were being enacted on the boards of theatres. This will be more manifest to the readers if they would refer to the article *Hindu Dharmer Andolon O' Sanskar* (Movement and reform of Hinduism) contributed to the *Nabya Bharat* some twenty-one years ago.

In the literary and political world there was a revival; it is needless to point out that the revival, we are speaking of, was not a spasmodic one, but an evolution of the scheme of reform inaugurated by Raja Ram Mohan Ray. Michael had just then closed his earthly career but the echoes of his soul-animating

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strains were still resounding. Dinabandhu was no more; Aukhoy Kumar Dutt had already fallen a victim to the fell disease to which he afterwards succumbed, and had ceased to Indianise western science; the first part of his *Upasak Sampradaya* (Religious Sects of India) had been published. Bankim Chandra was then ruling and every literary man was paying homage to him; there were lesser lights that were shining in their full effulgence, and among them were Hem Chandra, Nabin Chandra, Kali Prasanna, Chandra Nath, and a host of others.

In the art of journalism Dr. Sambhu Chander, and Kristo Das were exercising full sway; in the domain of research Drs. Rajendra Lall, Bhandarkar, Ram Das Sen, and the Hon'ble Telang were most well-known, and in the domain of politics Naoroji, Ranade, and Kristo Das were foremost, and last of all, though not the least, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar was ransacking the treasures of western science, and 'flinging his soul into it with an enthusiasm that threatened to devour him'. The Science Association had just then been organised; this Science Association will mark a new epoch in the history of India.

Thus we see that the period we are speaking of was literally to India, the period of Renaissance. Then our hero was only a lad in his early teens.

Although the late Swamiji was a true genius, yet his mind was being shaped to a great extent by the inspiration which he was drawing unconsciously from this Renaissance.

early life

Durga Charan Dutt, a man of money and landed property was the grandfather of Swamiji, he was well versed in the Persian and Sanskrit lore, and had a religious turn of mind as was manifest from his usual company with ascetics and *Sannyasins* in his garden, aloof from the tumult and bustle of society; his only son, Biswa Nath Dutt was born when Durga Charan was twenty-four years old. Ere this, he had been thinking of giving up the world, but could not carry out his desire into effect, for the consciousness of *Pitri rin* (debt owed to the forefathers, which is liquidated by the birth of a male issue) was always weighing upon his mind; this incident lightened his burden and he thought himself now emancipated from the trammels of *Pitri rin*, and renounced the world; no one could trace his whereabouts. According to the time-honoured custom of the *Sannyasins*, he came to see his family and friends after 12 years of *Sannyas*. His relatives tried to keep him at home, but to no effect; they shut him in a

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room for three days, after which, finding the doors slightly ajar he effected his escape and never returned.

Swamiji's father, Biswa Nath Dutt, an attorney of the High Court was not noted for his piety or religious proclivities; but he was charitably disposed; so much so, that when he died, he left no inheritance to the family but chilling want and carking misery.

Biswa Nath Dutt, and his wife were sorry at heart for want of a male issue; they worshipped the idol *Bireswar Mahadeb* (Shiva—the Hindu God) to grant them a child. Afterwards, Swamiji was born in 1863; he was supposed to have been born by propitiating the deity Bireswar and hence was named Bireswar, which contracted into *Biré* and afterwards into *Beelé*.

This child Bireswar was religious from his very infancy; many anecdotes are related expressing his religious nature even at an early age.

Bireswar's memory was extraordinarily retentive from his very infancy till his death; what he read once was well treasured up in his mind. It is said that, while very young, he detected and exposed the mistakes of a professional *Kirtanwala* (singer of religious songs) who was chanting pieces from the *Ramayan* (Indian Epic); he was so satisfied that he gave the boy a good treat of sweetmeats.

He was at first sent to a *Guru Mahasaya* or a pedagogue to acquire the first rudiments of the three 'R's; he was placed under a private tutor at home for some time and then was admitted into the Metropolitan Institution. After some time he was transferred to the

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Shampukur Branch of the Metropolitan Institution; but he appeared from the Main (Metropolitan) at the Entrance Examination and passed in the first division; read for a year in the Presidency College and then got himself admitted into the General Assembly's Institution and appeared from that College both at the F. A. and B. A. examinations. Narendra Nath (as Bireswar came to be known later) graduated in the year 1884.

Dr. Hastie was then the Principal of the College; he had a high opinion of Narendra Nath. In the G. A. Institution they had a debating club. On one occasion, Dr. Hastie was requested to be their president; but owing to previous engagements he could not comply with their request but recommended Narendra Nath to preside over their club for that sitting; the boys were astonished to hear his name recommended for he did not seem a bright luminary in the class; but to their utter astonishment, Narendra Nath discharged the function of the president very satisfactorily.

Narendra Nath was a voracious reader. He was very fond of literature, and philosophy and not given to light reading. He read so many books by this time that his remarks were often accompanied by quotations from them, and at the same time were very original, his own. Let us cite one of his remarks which led a friend of his to be attracted to him. Narendra Nath was discussing with a friend of his, the difference between an ordinary, and an extraordinary man. He said in the course of his conversation, 'Do you know the difference between an ordinary and an extraordinary

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man? It is this. An ordinary man tends to idealise the real things, whereas an extraordinary man tends to realise the ideal things. Hence I admire Paramhansa.

Narendra Nath, like his father, had a sweet voice; he cultivated the science of music from the Entrance class. His father placed him under the tuition of Beni Ostad, a pupil of Ahmed Khan; he continued to learn music for 4 or 5 years and afterwards contributed songs and wrote a learned preface to a book of music published conjointly by Baishnab Charan Basak and Upendra Chandra Mukherjee of the Basumati. Narendra Nath could sing very well and used to sing at the Brahmo Samaj. We had the good fortune to hear him sing to the accompaniment of *Pakhaoj* (musical instrument), himself playing on it.

This gift of his went a great way to court the favour of his Master, Paramhansa. How many times did his songs bring Paramhansa to God-consciousness or *Samadhi*! At first he was not familiar with Bengali songs; for Paramhansa he began to learn Bengali songs. The first Bengali song that he sang before his master was the oft-quoted one beginning with *Mon Chalo Nija Niketane* (Oh my soul! enter thy own abode!)

contact with his master

Let us return from the mundane to the spiritual world. Swamiji's first interview with Paramhansa was at Suresh Mitra's house at Simla (a locality in Calcutta) where Ram Chandra Dutta brought him to entertain Paramhansa by his songs. The second interview with Paramhansa was at Dakshineswar (a place near Calcutta) where Swamiji went on a pleasure trip, in the company of his friends. Paramhansa told him to come alone. He went a third time to see him alone and had a long talk with him on many topics. Paramhansa placed his feet on Swamiji's body; upon this, the world seemed to him to be receding; he thought he was about to be hypnotised, and cried out 'Sir, what are you practising on me? My parents are still living.' Paramhansa then brought him to his sense and began to console him.

On the first interview Swamiji took Paramhansa for a mad man, but characterised by sincerity and renunciation. He thought that incessant thinking had

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brought about derangement of the brain; gradually he became attracted by him and began to cling to him with tenacity. Let us trace the secret of it.

From his very early life Swamiji tried to catch the First Principle in the vast mechanism of the Universe; his soul began to cry like Goethe's Faust, 'Where shall I grasp thee, Infinite Nature, ah where!' He had been yearning to learn 'the open-sesame' of the infinite treasure-cave of spirituality and in the language of Schiller, the Great German poet,

'——— to seek in the marvel of chance the

Law which pervades, and controls it and to seek the
Reposing pole fixed in the whirl of events.'

and in his own language 'to solve the problems and enigmas that have been perplexing the human intellect from time immemorial.'

This is well illustrated by his quaint question to his Master, 'Have you seen and realised God?' The saint replied, 'Verily my child, I have seen myself and shall show unto thee.' This moment is an important factor in the development of Swamiji's life; for till then he had been getting answers to the contrary.

Now he was awed and dazzled into admiration. Henceforth a true communion of soul began to take place between them. Paramhansa initiated him into the mysteries of being. This idea of realisation became in his afterlife, the chief tenet in his articles of belief. We find this idea repeated in many of his speeches and conversations; this idea is repeated in his first lecture at the Parliament of Religions. In the course of his

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lecture he said, "The best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God is, *I have seen the soul, I have seen God!*"

His life was now being tuned to the harmony which became his motto afterwards. His mind began to drink deep but quiet draughts of inspiration in his company, which was kindled into reverie and ecstasy, for he began to pray to the Divine Mother, 'No more of knowledge and analysis, O, Mother, make me mad after Thee.' The Mother responded to the call of her guileless child.

By the contact of Paramhansa, all that was dross in the life of Swamiji was converted into gold; in fact the saint revolutionised the mind of the spiritual aspirant, overthrew the fabric which the Swami built, and built a new one in its place. Verily, this was his *Puneryanma* (rebirth). Although he had the dim smouldering fire of spirituality in him, it was set ablaze by a few puffs from the saint. The thread of his secular life snapped. The spiritual fire that was burning in him seemed to consume all the limitations and differentiations in his mind, and like heat tended to expand his soul infinitely, for the energy of this fire was infinite. In this period he amassed a store of potential energy to be used up and converted into kinetic energy later on; dynamically speaking, the work by which the potential energy was gained was perfect control of the senses, or *Jitendriyatta*, as we call it. His soul now could find no pleasure in limitations; it flapped its wings, as it were, to go beyond limitations and relativity, and

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to fly in the absolute; he began to say with never-satiated craving, 'Light, more light.'

Before this he was articled to Babu Nimai Charan Bose, the well-known attorney of the High Court and was also preparing for the B. L. Examination. In the meantime, Bisu Dutta, his father died leaving them in poverty. Narendra now found himself in a sea of misery and became a teacher of the Metropolitan Institution. I have heard from a friend of mine who was his pupil that the Swamiji used to insist on moral and religious teachings. Narendra now lost the equilibrium of his mind and intimated to Paramhansa—for he was his guide, monitor, and guardian angel, so to speak—to give him his best advice; forthwith the saint replied, 'Apply to my Mother;' Narendra was now put to a crucial test; he went to the temple of *Kali* (Goddess) at Dakshineswar to pray for money; but lo, he had forgotten every thing in the temple; money became mere lumber to him, and prayed instead, 'Mother, give me *Bibek* (conscience) and *Bairagya* (renunciation).' Narendra now began to call on his Master frequently; once in a garden at Cossipore (a locality in Calcutta) he told him 'Sir, what are you doing for me?' The saint asked, 'What do you want, my child?' Narendra Nath replied, 'I want to be buried in *Samadhi* (complete union of one's soul with the God) continually for five or six days.' Forthwith the saint replied, 'You are a fool to ask such a boon; why, don't you like to realise and see God in ordinary life without having recourse to *Samadhi*?' Narendra

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said, 'Do what you think proper; but do something for me after all.' It is probable that Swamiji was first initiated by his Master into *Ram Mantra* (to concentrate on Ram's name). This period was his period of *Sadhan* (meditation) according to the instructions from his Master.

The saint now closed his earthly life in *Maha Samadhi* (demise) in 1886. From 1881 to 1886 Narendra became the right hand of his Master, as the saint used to say. A few self-sacrificing youngmen nursed the saint during his illness. Now these young men determined to work out the ideas propagated by Paramhansa and they assembled at Barnagore (a suburb of Calcutta) with Narendra Nath as their head. A *Math* (temple cum dormitory) was established at the expense of Suresh Mitra. There they continued to read and meditate. One of the characteristic features of this *math* was *Sankirtan* (devotional songs). Once a whole day *Kirtan* (hymn) was organised; they used to chant the name of the Lord the whole day and night, taking rest for four hours only. This continued for seven days in succession. This scheme was abandoned, for it told severely on their health.

Now he formally renounced the world; practised severe penances in many parts of India. How many sleepless nights did he pass in meditation! Then he went out on a tour throughout the whole of India from the snow-clad Himalayas to Kanya Kumarika (Cape Comorin). During this period of travel he became

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acquainted with many men of note and territorial consequence, among whom are many Rajas and Chiefs (Princes and Chieftains). We have tried our best to gather information of this period; but this period is very obscure, in as much as he travelled on many occasions singly, without any of his *Guru Bhais* (Brother Disciples) as his companion.

During this period of travel he visited almost all the important places of pilgrimage from Karna Prayag, Pravas, Dwarka, to Kanya Kumari. He was always accompanied by one or two of his *Guru Bhais*. He began to think now that though he had given up the worldly ties, still he had attachment for his *Guru Bhai*, and thought that this *Maya* (attachment) might be detrimental to his spirituality; so he determined to travel alone; but the *Guru Bhais* would not leave him. He stealthily went away from Delhi, but they too followed him; he devised many means to baffle their pursuits and to put them off the scent. What by entreaty, and what by threat, he had to elude their grasp, when they succeeded in ferretting him out of his place of seclusion and retreat! They travelled several hundred miles to accompany him; but he was firm and would not allow him to be entangled in the meshes of *Maya* again. From Delhi he travelled alone in many parts of Rajputana, *e.g.* Ajmere, Jaipur, Alwar, Mt. Abu, etc. and formed the acquaintance of the Raja of Khetri. From Rajputana he travelled alone to Pravas, Porbunder, Dwarka, Mandabi, and Narayan Sarobar. At Mandabi he met with one of his associates; but by threat

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sent him away. During this period he travelled in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies and formed acquaintance with many men of note. He became acquainted with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and also became known to Raja Sankar Pandurang, the great Sanskrit scholar, and helped him in the translation of the *Vedas*; here he got ample opportunities to study the *Vedas* thoroughly and also formed the acquaintance of Hari Dass Behari Dass, Dewan to the Nawab of Junagadh. This gentleman, Hari Dass Behari Dass introduced Swamiji to many Rajas and Chiefs among whom the Thakor of Limdi and the Raja of Kutch are important and hence was indirectly instrumental in the success which the Swamiji achieved in his mission.

looks to the west

Vivekananda had a firm belief for a long time before his starting for America, that he had a mission to perform, that he had a task imposed upon him by his Master. He thought that unless an energy comes from accross the seas, it will not be possible to shake off the lethargy of the nation of Lotus-eaters, to rouse their dormant spirit, and that the medium of the Occident is necessary to infuse life and vigor into our fossilised constitution.

That he had the consciousness of a mission, a vocation like Milton, is evident from the following cuttings from his private letters. He wrote in a letter to a friend of his at Madras from America, 'Hundred times I had a mind to go out of the country and go back; but then I think I am a determined devil, and I have a call from above; I see no ways but his eyes see and I must stick to my guns.'

'Look sharp, my boy, take courage, we are destined by the Lord to do great things in India. Have faith;

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we will do, we the poor and despised who really feel'. In another part he says, 'I am called by the Lord for this', and again 'we are selected by the Lord to do great things.'

This consciousness was not roused in him after the idea of the Parliament of Religions was announced in the newspapers; his mission to work in the West was independent of the Parliament of Religions; he must have gone to the West even if the idea of the Parliament were not conceived. The Parliament of Religions was simply a means to the end; it rather hastened the fulfilment of his mission. For, he says in a letter addressed to a friend before the Parliament sat, 'First, I will try in America; if I fail, try in England, if I fail, go back to India and wait for further command from High.'

He had been thinking during his travel how he would carry out his plan of campaign. He came to Madras where he formed the acquaintance of many self-sacrificing young graduates. He persuaded them into his mode of belief. Before this, the Raja of Khetri in Rajputana had become his disciple; now H. H. the Maharaja of Mysore became his admirer. The Maharaja of Mysore rendered him pecuniary help to start for America; and also subscriptions were raised in Madras by Babu Manmatha Nath Bhattacharji. to meet his expenses.

Let us mention an important incident which sustained this consciousness which drooped now and then, finding no means to fulfil his mission. He had been

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dreaming daily, that his Master was rebuking him for being infirm of purpose, and for neglect of duty. He went to a person nearby who could read thoughts on seeing a man. Just on seeing Vivekananda, the man said, 'Why are you not following your Guru's orders? Go, and discharge the task that he has imposed upon you.'

This incident braced up his drooping spirit, put him on his mettle and made him most firm in his conviction. This person is alluded to in his lecture on "The Powers of the Mind" delivered in America.

Swamiji was not invited to represent Hinduism; at the request of his friends, he consented to go and to try if he could find an opportunity to represent Hinduism. He went by the Pacific; alighted on his way in China and Japan and landed in Vancouver. From Vancouver he went through Canada to Chicago. There his scanty funds were exhausted and he became penniless. He had not even the wherewithal to pay his bill of fare, no clothing to protect his mortal frame against elemental warfare; he looked for help to a friend, and a countryman of his who also went there to represent the religion he professed. He received the most galling and humiliating treatment at his hands, who did nothing for him but tried to thwart his progress out of jealousy by circulating false rumours. This, he has said in his Madras lecture. Starvation and cold had oftentimes made him think to give up the mission, but his inner nature sustained his failing spirit. The following cuttings will bear me out.

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He wrote to a friend just on reaching America, 'It was very cold and I suffered much from want of warm clothing Starvation, cold, hooting in the streets for my quaint dress—these are what I have to fight through.' In another letter he writes, 'I do not know whether I shall go back to Chicago for want of money If I die of cold, or disease, or hunger you take the task.' Even he had not the money to come back to India. He says in another letter, 'If you fail in keeping me here, send some money to get me out of the country.'

On reaching America, he saw that the preparations for the Parliament were going on; meanwhile he began to address small social circles at Boston, and Salem, etc.; he thought that even if he had money how he could find an opportunity of being introduced to the organisers of the Parliament; there was the rub. Let us cite a passage from a letter of his written to his friend wherein it is stated how he overcame this difficulty. 'At a village near Boston I made the acquaintance of Dr. Wright, professor of Greek, in the Harvard University. He sympathised much and urged upon me the necessity of going to the Parliament of Religions which he thought would give me an introduction to the nation.'

This professor is said to have requested the prime movers of the Parliament to invite him; he wrote to the following effect, 'He is more learned than all of us together.' Thus he was introduced. His speech electrified the audience. By a single speech he became famous like the 'Single-speech Hamilton.' The result

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of this speech was that all his wants were supplied. He writes to a friend, 'For many of the handsomest houses in the city are open to me, and all the time I am living as guest with somebody or other.'

We hope we may be pardoned if we tire the patience of our readers by presenting to them a few passages and remarks culled from the most well-known American newspapers.

Dr. Barrows, the president of the Parliament said, 'India, the Mother of religions was represented by Swami Vivekananda, the Orange-monk who exercised the most wonderful influence over his auditors.'

The New York Herald remarked: 'Vivekananda was undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions; after hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation.'

The Press remarked: 'Vivekananda's culture, eloquence, and his fascinating personality have given us a new idea of civilisation. His fine intelligent face and his deep musical voice prepossessing one at once in his favour, has preached in clubs and churches until this faith has become familiar to us. He speaks without notes presenting his facts and his conclusions with the greatest art, the most convincing sincerity and rising often to rich inspiring eloquence.'

Another paper remarked: 'One of the most interesting personages is Professor Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu theologian of great learning, who made an address which captured the Congress, so to speak. There were bishops, and ministers of every Christian

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Church present and they were all taken by storm. The eloquence of the man with intellect beaming from his yellow face, his splendid English in describing the beauties of his time-honoured faith, all conspired to make a deep impression on the audience. From the day the wonderful professor delivered that speech which was followed by other addresses, he was followed by a crowd wherever he went.'

We cull the following from a letter of Swamiji's containing a description of the Parliament:

'On the morning of the opening of the Parliament we all assembled in a building called the Art Palace where one huge and other smaller temporary halls were erected for the sittings of the Parliament. Men from all nations were there; there was a grand procession and we were all marshalled on the platform. Imagine a hall below and huge gallery above packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform learned men of all the nations of the earth, and I who never spoke in my life, to address this august assemblage! It was opened in great form with music and ceremony, and speeches; and then the delegates were introduced one by one, and they stepped up and spoke; of course my heart was fluttering and my tongue nearly dried up; I was so much nervous, and could not venture to speak in the morning,.....made a nice speech,nicer, and were much applauded; they were all prepared and came with ready-made speeches. I was a fool and had none but bowed down to Devi

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Saraswati and stepped up and Dr. Barrows introduced me. My yellow dress had some effect, and then I made a short speech of thanking them and other things. When I addressed the assembly as 'Sisters and Brothers of America,' a deafening applause of two minutes followed, and then I proceeded, and when it was finished I sat down almost exhausted with emotion. The next day all the papers announced that my speech was the hit of the day and I became known to whole America. Truly it is said by the great commentator Sridhar, '*Mukang karoti Bachalam, etc.*' (Thou makest the dumb fluent speakers, etc.). His name be praised! From that, I have become the celebrity, and the day I read my paper on Hinduism the hall was packed as it has never been before.'

A striking contrast is presented here between his condition before the sitting of the Parliament and after it. People of high rank vied with one another to shake hands with the Swamiji. His name became a household word in America. This aroused the jealousy of the sinecure officers of the Church and the missionaries. They strove hard to injure his reputation in every way possible; they tried to pry into his secrets with their *Argus* eyes; some represented that he was not a bachelor and that he had many wives at home, and so forth. Thus they tried to pour forth the vial of their wrath over his success. We have heard him say that even his life was endangered. He put up with all these calmly befitting him as the dictator to the human mind in the domain of spirituality.

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After staying a few years in America he went to Europe in 1896. In England he did not get such a broad field for work as in America, but he used to say that his work in England was more successful than that in America. In England many members of the Royal family used to come quite incognito to hear his lectures.

Swami Vivekananda was acquainted with many learned and well-known men of Europe, and America, such as Professor Max Muller, Tesla, Maxim, Paul Deussen and a host of others. He was invited by Professor Max Muller at Oxford, and the savant was so charmed that he drove with Swamiji to the station to see him off. He furnished materials to the Professor to publish the life of Paramhansa.

After visiting many parts of Europe he returned to India in 1897; a monument has been erected by the Raja of Ramnad, in the southern part of India, on the spot where he landed. He now toured through the whole of Northern India; established the Belur and Madras *Maths* to realise the ideal that he had been preaching so long. He started the *Udbodhan*, a fortnightly journal, to which he contributed several articles. After staying a few years in India he again started for America in 1899. Now the centre of his work was California. In June 1900 he went to New York and thence he came over to Europe to attend the Paris Exhibition where he was invited to address the Conference of the History of Religions; his speech has been published in their proceedings. From France he travelled

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through the southern part of Europe and thence came to Turkey where he was received with ovation; he delivered three lectures at Constantinople; thence he went to see the Pyramids in Egypt and thence returned to India. The Swamiji now proceeded on a pilgrimage to Amar Nath. With his health completely shattered, he now began to lead a retired life and to train his disciples in *Dhyan* and *Dharana* (meditation and concentration). In the year of his death he was invited to take a leading and prominent part in the religious conference that was to be held in Japan, but by his sudden death every scheme of his was frustrated.

Before his second visit to America he was attacked with diabetes; symptoms of decay were noticed in his system; he was placed under many forms of treatment, but to no effect. This disease ate into the vitals of his life. He suffered from this disease till his death on the 4th July, 1902.

On the day of his death he meditated in a room for several hours in the morning and sang one of the favourite songs of his Master. The inmates of the *Math* were charmed at this song; after dinner at noon he taught *Panini* and *Yajur Veda* (Vedic grammar and prose part of the Vedas) for three hours, and in the afternoon walked for about a mile and a half.

After dusk he went upstairs to meditate; according to the advice of Dr. Sanders he was not permitted to remain alone, and a disciple of his went upstairs with him; Swamiji told him, to be a little aloof as he would now meditate; he had been waiting at a distance on the

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terrace for about an hour when Swamiji called him, and expressed the desire to take rest, and told him to fan him a little as he was feeling hot; he lay down with the rosary in his hands, and fell fast asleep shortly; he slept for about an hour, and afterwards groaned like a child, and then his life became extinct; thus he expired at the premature age of forty.

The scenes in which his death is laid, lend a charm and pathos to it. Imagine for a moment the sylvan scene, soft breeze stealing from the south and wooing on its way, every bud and flower fringing the border of the *Bhageerath* (Ganges), a dead calm, and silence all around, broken at interval, by the 'nightly sorrow' of the nightingale, the river keeping up a low perpetual murmur near by, the sky shrouded in darkness, so dark that it could be felt, all these, and amidst these scenes, Lo,

'Vital Spark of heavenly flame!

Quit, oh quit, this mortal frame.'

These associations are really in the language of Rev. Pattison, 'ingredients of the dream on Parnassus.' In fact, the imagination kindles into reverie and rapture. These associations breathed a grace and charm into the grimness of death.

Vivekananda has gone in the deepest hush of night to meet his Master who had been awaiting him in 'lands invisible beyond the grave.' His sudden death took us by surprise; we heard with frozen wonder that our beloved Swamiji is no more. We do not know whether we are to be sorry, or to rejoice over his death, for he

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has 'passed from death to life.' We do not know whether we should lament, or say, with George Canning, 'Mount Sinless Spirit to thy destined rest.' His death is indeed a national calamity and a heavy loss to the country, alike to his nearest and dearest, though, 'his is the gain, but ours the pain.'

his ideas

Let us pass on to the chief ideas propagated by him. We remember to have read in his *Karma Yoga*, 'Unity in variety is the plan of creation.' 'This is a universal law, and it holds good both in the material and mental world. We find the very law repeated in *Cosmos*, a great work by Alexander Von Humboldt, one of the greatest of scientists and philosophers of Germany. He says, "The aspect of external nature, as it presents itself in its generality to the thoughtful contemplation, is that of unity in diversity, and of connection, resemblance, and order among created things most dissimilar in their form—one fair harmonious whole'.

Next comes the idea of sin. The Swamiji used to say that we should not consider ourselves sinners. He has said in his lecture at Chicago, 'You are souls immortal, spirits free and blest and eternal. Ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter'. According to him we are *Amritasya Putra etc.* (the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings, etc.)

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Swamiji used to hold that we are not an insignificant portion of the creative plan. The idea of man's infinite littleness was shocking to him. We do not know how far is this doctrine philosophically, or spiritually sound, but its importance from a utilitarian point of view can not be exaggerated.

Another idea of Swamiji is very significant,—that every one is great in his own sphere. Suppose you are a rich man; you are born with a silver spoon in your mouth, whereas a sweeper in the street is born in abject poverty. In consequence of this, you have no right to think that you are greater than the sweeper; nay, even the sweeper may be greater than you if he discharges his duty well, whereas you fail to do your duty. This is indeed a grand idea.

Let us pass on to another idea, that there is essence in all religions, all are true. This idea, (—and what was not!)—was inculcated by his Master long before, and he took up the cue from him. This is clearly expressed in his lecture at Brooklyn: 'If one creed alone were to be true, and all the others untrue, you would have again to say that, that religion is diseased. If one religion is true, all the others must be true.' Swamiji used to hold that religion formulated in dogmas and doctrines, whereas not carried out in practice, is of no avail whatever, in fine is useless. This, we have noticed before, was the corner-stone of his ideas taken as a whole.

Swamiji's idea of Evolution may probably be called the centre towards which all his ideas converge. He

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says that the rising from the lower state to the higher is not due to any addition but an emanation, or a manifestation from within. To express it briefly, it is manifestation of the Divinity by its own nature. Swamiji says, "The momentum is not from outside, but comes from inside. It is the very nature of things to manifest themselves." "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest the divinity within by controlling nature, external or internal." His idea of Evolution is not the same as is accepted by the modern thoughtful world, for he says, "These competitions and struggles and evils that we see are not the effect of the involution or the cause, but they are in the way. If they did not exist, still man would go on, and evolve as God, because it is the very nature of God to come out and manifest Himself. To my mind, this seems hopeful, instead of that horrible idea of competition. The more I study history, the more I find that idea to be wrong. Some say that if man did not fight with man, he would not progress. I used to think so; but I find now that every war has thrown back human progress by fifty years instead of hurrying it forward. The day will come when man will study history from a different light and find that competition is neither the cause, nor the effect, simply things on the way, not necessary to creation at all. The theory of *Patanjali* (one of the propounders of six principal Indian Philosophic systems) is the only theory I think a rational man can accept. How much evil the modern system causes!"

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We are sorry we do not find our way to accept these views from which we dissent.

Swamiji has defined Soul, Death and God in the following aphorisms:

‘Soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere (limitless), but whose centre is in some body. Death is but a change of centre. God is a circle whose circumference is nowhere and whose centre everywhere. When we can get out of the limited centre of body, we shall realize God, our true self.’

In the *Karma Yōga* we come across the following: ‘Every man should take up his own ideal and endeavour to accomplish it; that is a surer way of progress than taking up other men’s ideals which he can never hope to accomplish.’ This is very true. This is the surer way to individual expansion.

The spiritual life has its different stages of growth, and as such will thrive unequally under different conditions. The food which is necessary and sufficient for the rearing up of a child is found insufficient for the same purpose in the case of an adult. If different conditions, or stages of growth play such an important part in the physical world, why should they not do so in the spiritual world? Our forefathers attached much importance to this very significant fact, and hence have enjoined upon us different modes of life according to its growth. This very fact underlies our caste system, however degenerated it may be now.

In the *Jnana Yoga*, Swamiji has very elaborately discussed the cosmic problems in the lecture on Cosmos.

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We cannot resist the temptation of quoting the following passage which beautifully summarises his explanation of Cosmos:

'Now then, what do we see? That the beginning of all the manifestation of this cosmic energy, call it by various names, as matter, or thought, or force, or intelligence or whatever names you choose to give it, is simply the manifestation of that cosmic intelligence, or as we shall call Him henceforth, the Supreme Lord. Everything that you see, or feel, or hear, is His creation, to be a little more accurate, is His projection; still more accurate, the Lord Himself. It is He who is shining as the Sun and the stars. He is the mother earth; He is the ocean Himself. He comes as gentle showers. He is the gentle breeze that we breathe, and He it is, who is working as force in the body. He is the speech that speaks. He is the man who is talking; He is the audience that is here. He is the platform on which I stand; He is the light that enables me to see your faces. It is all He. He Himself is both the material and the efficient cause of this Universe, and He it is, that gets involved in the minute cell and evolves at the other end, and becomes God again. This is the mystery of the Universe.'

The Swamiji has on many occasions described Paramhansa, as the incarnation of Divinity, come down to the earth to fulfill the pledge contained in the *Geeta*, '*Yada Yadarhi Dharmasya Glanirbhabati Bharata*, etc.' (Whenever religion subsides etc.)

He has said in his well-known address at the

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residence of Rajah Radhakant Deb Bahadur to the following effect, 'If the nation wants to rise, it will have to come enthusiastically round *his* name. Him I place before you and it is for you to judge.'

We fail to understand what he really means by this. Does he mean that the national salvation lies in the acceptance of Paramhansa as the incarnation of Divinity, or does he want the nation to assimilate only the spirit of his teachings? We raise this doubt frankly, for we apprehend rank idolatry has already gained access into the minds of his many followers. Ramkrishna Paramhansa has already been given a place in the Hindu Pantheon. We must admit that although we yield to none in our appreciation of hero-worship, we can not tolerate the worship of a man with the attributes of Divinity ascribed to him. This is pernicious. In this age of Natural Selection, Survival of the Fittest, and Cosmic Emotion, to make religion out of the ideas of incarnation etc. is in the language of Sir Frederic Harrison 'far more extravagant than to make it out of the Equator, or the Binomial Theorem.' We know we are incurring the displeasure of a large section of our community, but '*Magn'na est vèri-tas, et præva-lébit.*'

The roaring lion of the Vedanta kicketh at the jackass of idolatry. From our study of Vivekananda's life we have come to the conclusion that the Swamiji was the staunchest exponent of the *Vedanta* (philosophic appendices of the Vedas) and as such we expect

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him to be antagonistic to the popular form of idolatry or even to the conception of personal God, or '*Sagun Brahma*' for does he not say in the *Jnana Yoga*, 'Great thinking persons, people who at least are thought to be great thinkers by the world, get disgusted at the idea of impersonality; but to me it seems so ludicrous, so low, so vulgar, if I may say, so blasphemous. It is very good for children to think of God as an embodied man. It is pardonable in a child, but not in a grown-up man, thoughtful man or woman to think that God is a man or woman or so forth....., on the other hand the Impersonal God is a living God whom I see before me, a principle.' (*Jnana Yoga* p. 220 First Edition—Udbodhan Series).

The above lines unmistakably express Vivekananda's conception of Divinity; and hence his setting up of Paramhansa as God embodied in human form seems to us an anomaly. This anomaly can, however, be explained away by considering that the utterances alluded to about Paramhansa, were those of a disciple about his *Guru* who according to Hindu traditions is a veritable deity—'*Akhandā Mandalakaram Byāptam Jēnā Characharam*, etc.' (the form which is infinite and pervades the universe, etc.)

What the Swamiji calls 'a principle' in his *Jnana Yoga* is according to Herbert Spencer, 'An Infinite Eternal energy from which all things proceed. It has not mind; it has not will; its attributes are negative, the Ultimate Reality, transcending all thought' (C. F. '*Aprāpya Manasa Saha*, etc.')

THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, A STUDY

We admire the method in which Vivekananda has discussed the most subtle spiritual problems; they are discussed from a scientific point of view. This is the spirit of the age. His *Raja Yoga* registers the high watermark of this method. We wholly agree with Prof. Tyndall's memorable words, 'Science shall wrest from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory.'

If we are to sum up in one word the teaching that Vivekananda sought to instil into our minds we must say it is *Brahmacharya* (ascetic life with particular stress on abstinence).

Since the days of Raja Ram Mohan Ray no teacher pleaded for *Brahmacharya* with so much emphasis as the late Swamiji. Although we do not accept all his teachings, we candidly confess that it is this intense practicability of his teachings that has a charm of its own, of which mere theorists have no idea. The following lines from a poem of his very clearly express his idea of *Brahmacharya*:

"Truth never comes where lust
and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who
thinks of woman

As his wife can ever perfect be."

Many raise the objection that Swami Vivekananda did harm to society by giving up the worldly ties; they say that he might have achieved wonders if he had remained in the world. In many passages he has indirectly vindicated his renunciation. He says that

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some people are for *Tyag* or renunciation, and others are for *Bhoga* or enjoyment. Each has his own destiny to perform, each has his own peculiar path chalked out for him; if a man be made for renunciation he will fare very badly in the world, and similarly a man who is made for this world can not fare well in renunciation. This is a natural law, as universal as the Law of Gravitation itself. The great philosopher David Hume understood fully the soundness of this law. He has said in one of his Essays, 'Nor can a rational soul, made for the contemplation of the Supreme Being and of His works, ever enjoy tranquility or satisfaction, while detained in the ignoble pursuits of sensual pleasures or popular applause.'

Our attention was struck a few days ago, by a remark that the Swamiji would have made a good lawyer, if he so willed. We think this remark to be utterly erroneous, for it gives the lie direct to his mental constitution. He would not have been other than what he was, for his was an organic mind.

Let us turn for a moment to his conception of womanhood. Women were to him sacred. An American woman, owner of several millions, once asked him to marry her; she said that she would sign a contract to the effect that she would not induce him to indulge in the gratification of sensual pleasures, and that she would simply enjoy poetry of life. To this the Swamiji replied, 'why shall I marry, when I see the manifestation of Divine Mother in every woman.'

Vivekananda's regard for his *Guru* was wonder-

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ful; he has declared himself to be 'the most unworthy of his servants.' Let us quote a few lines from his lecture delivered at Madras: 'Let me conclude by saying that if in my life I have told one word of truth it was his and his alone, and if I have told you many things which were not true, correct, and beneficial to the human race, it was all mine, and on me is the responsibility.' He wrote to a friend of his, 'It is better to leave everything in the hands of him who is at my back leading me.' Let us narrate the following incident which describes his regard for his *Guru*. Swamiji, while touring through India as a *Paribrajak* (mendicant traveller), came to Swami Bhaskarananda of Benares; while talking with him on the destruction of the senses, Swami Bhaskarananda declared that it is impossible to annihilate the senses. The Swamiji boldly asserted to his face that his *Guru*, at whose feet he had the privilege to sit, had completely annihilated his senses, and that if any body brought a piece of metal in contact with his hand, it was invariably paralysed. To this Bhaskarananda replied, 'Your *Guru* was a cheat, a charlatan.' Upon this Swamiji, young as he was, remonstrated with Bhaskarananda in whose presence ordinary people dared not utter a word.

We shall conclude this chapter with the mention of another characteristic feature of the Swamiji's teachings—that our conduct of life should be uncompromising. This habit of compromise, this suppleness of nature, is most fatal to our 'inward growth.' Those who are fortunate in having any contact with the

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Swamiji, while he was alive, know full well that his teachings smack of stoicism, which is essentially necessary for the rising of a nation as it is equally necessary in the case of an individual.

the patriot

The life of Swami Vivekananda was a living illustration of the ascendancy of spirit over matter. It is a disgrace to our vaunted civilisation that we have done nothing practically to consecrate his memory. It is as it should be. For, steeped in soulless materialism as we are, how can we do homage to one who rose above matter, and established his supremacy over it? It gives us pain to see our hero 'by strangers honoured and by strangers mourned.' Verily has Christ said, 'No prophet is honoured in his own country.' It is a pitiable sight to see our brethren of the southern part of India, pour forth the full exuberance of their hearts in his name, whereas we do not pay him even our grudging thanks.

It is a disgrace that his memorial meeting has shared the fate of meetings of this sort, and has produced no result as yet. Had he been born in a country other than India, a statue would have been erected to perpetuate his memory and he would have been

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canonized a saint; but, here, by the strange irony of fate, everything is to the contrary, and Swami Vivekananda is dead quite unrecognised by us. The reason is not far to seek; for, he had not the suave pretensions and his whole life was a crusade against hypocrisy; he was not a man of religious cant. We have heard him speak on many occasions, in terms of fire, against the hypocrites, and his thrusts were principally levelled against those who 'face the world with a brazen front of assumed honour.' He did not care for 'the world's contempt—a bagatelle.'

The Swami Vivekananda is now in the lands of the 'spirits elect', and does not care whether we offer our tribute of respect or not, whether any 'polished marble emulates his face', or 'hallowed dirge is muttered over his ashes.'

It is a matter of great regret that a certain big man of this country declined to preside over his memorial meeting simply because his views on religion were at variance with those of Swamiji's. As we knew the Swamiji for several years, and as we made it a point to study him with scrutiny, let us first point out that he had no narrow creed. His creed is universal and may suit all. He had a great dislike for narrow dogmas. This he has said repeatedly. He was simply an apostle of truth. Truth was welcome to him from whatever quarter it came.

But even if we admit doctrinal difference, why should we lose sight of the other phase of his character which is none the less important? It is the spirit of

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patriotism and the 'sympathetic touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.' Even to a careless reader his writings and lectures breathe the spirit of patriotism. Although he did not publicly identify himself with any public organisation, yet he was a patriot to his backbone. Even his rankest detractors would admit this. Who can shed tears for his country? While in Germany he burst into tears, seeing the opulence of that country as contrasted with the poverty of India. Very aptly has Sister Nivedita remarked in an article contributed to the Hindu of Madras, that 'the occident with all its luxuries, had no charms. To him the garb of a beggar, the lanes of Calcutta, and the disabilities of his own people were more dear than all the glory of the foreigner'. This will be more manifest to the readers if they would refer to the following lines culled from the conclusion of the *Bartaman Bharat*:

‘হে ভারত, এই পরানুবাদ, পরানুকরণ, পরমুখাপেক্ষা, এই দাসশুলভ দুর্বলতা, এই স্থগিত-জঘন্ত-নিষ্ঠুরতা—এই মাত্র সহায়ে তুমি উচ্চাধিকার লাভ করিবে? এই লজ্জাকর কাপুরুষতা সহায়ে তুমি বীরভোগ্যা স্বাধীনতা লাভ করিবে?

হে ভারত, ভুলিও না—তোমার নারীজাতির আদর্শ সীতা, সাবিত্রী, দময়ন্তী; ভুলিও না—তোমার উপাস্ত উমানাথ সর্বভাগী শঙ্কর; ভুলিও না—তোমার বিবাহ, তোমার ধন, তোমার জীবন, ইন্দ্রিয় সুখের, নিজের ব্যক্তিগত সুখের জন্ত নহে; ভুলিও না—তুমি জন্ম হইতেই ‘মায়ের’ জন্ত বলিপ্রদত্ত; ভুলিও না—তোমার সমাজ সে বিরাট মহামায়ের ছায়ামাত্র; ভুলিও না—নীচ জাতি, দরিদ্র, অজ্ঞ,

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মুচী, মেথর, তোমার রক্ত, তোমার ভাই। হে বীর সাহস অবলম্বন কর, সদর্পে বল—আমি ভারতবাসী, ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই ; বল, মূর্খ ভারতবাসী, দরিদ্র ভারতবাসী, ব্রাহ্মণ ভারতবাসী, চণ্ডাল ভারতবাসী—আমার ভাই ; তুমিও কটিমাত্র বস্ত্রাবৃত হইয়া সদর্পে ডাকিয়া বল ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই, ভারতবাসী আমার প্রাণ, ভারতের দেবদেবী আমার ঈশ্বর, ভারতের সমাজ আমার শিশুশয্যা, আমার যৌবনের উপবন, আমার বার্ষিক্যের বারাগসী ; বল ভাই, ভারতের মুক্তিকা আমার স্বর্গ, ভারতের কল্যাণ আমার কল্যাণ, আর বল দিনরাত, হে গৌরীনাথ, হে জগদশ্বে আমার মনুষ্য দাও, মা, আমার দুর্বলতা, কাপুরুষতা দূর কর, আমার ‘মানুষ কর’।’

(Oh India! with this mere echoing of others, with this base imitation of others, with this dependence on others, this weakness of the slave, this vile detestable tyranny (of class and caste) wouldst thou—with these only, scale the heights for high power? Wouldst thou attain, by means of this disgraceful cowardice that freedom which the brave and the heroic alone can attain?

O India! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, forget not that the God thou worshipping is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Sankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is

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but the reflex of the infinite universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the sweepers, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian—and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother'. Say, 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother.' Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins, proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice, 'The Indian is my brother, the India is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age.' Say, brother, 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good' and repeat and pray day and night, 'O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a man!')

This passage is one among many expressing the love for his country to the improvement of which he dedicated his life. Though he had not the pert loquacity of the so-called patriots, he, in our opinion, was the greatest patriot of modern times. It was at his express will that the relief works were taken in hand by the Ramkrishna Mission in different famine-stricken districts of India. When, Sister Nivedita and others were disinfecting the plague-infected quarters of Calcutta, the Swamiji said that he was ready even to sell his *Math* to meet the expenses.

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We remember vividly his face beaming with inspiration, when he was advising us, a few students assembled together, about ten years ago, to the following effect, 'What good is there if your practice *Yoga*, while your brethren die of starvation? Go abroad; help the needy; succour the poor, and make country a honeycomb, as it were'.

The Swamiji was an optimist even when the prospect was gloomy; to him the future of India was not shrouded in dismal darkness.

The Swamiji used to say that the system of education imparted by our university is faulty, and is, to a great extent, bar to the awakening of national consciousness, for foreign ideas and ideals are set before the students to emulate from their very childhood; by this, they imbibe a natural hatred for all that is national; he used to say that to rise in the scale of nations we should not lose sight of the glorious traditions of our past history but should be fully alive to them.

The representative of the *Prabuddha Bharat* asked, 'Then what you really desire is national efficiency'? The Swamiji replied, 'Certainly. Can you adduce any reason why India should lie in the ebb-tide of the Aryan nations? Is she inferior in intellect? Is she inferior in dexterity? Can you look at her art, at her mathematics, at her philosophy, and answer 'Yes'? All that is needed is that she would de-hypnotize herself, and wake up from her age-long sleep to take her true rank in the hierarchy of nations'.

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Vivekananda had a great regard for Pundit Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar, and Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, and used to say men like Dr. Bose are needed to work out the salvation of India.

We have often found the Swamiji to impress upon his countrymen the necessity of developing the resources of the country; he expressed the desire to give effect to it by sending young men to Japan and America for technical education.

Swamiji's motto was *Uttisthata, Jagrata etc.*, (Arise, awake, struggle on till the goal is reached etc.). Truly, it does credit to the remark of the Englishman, that the Swamiji 'seemed more like a warrior than a priest'. The following extracts from his private letters will bear this out:

To a doctor at Madras:

'For us is submission calm, and perfect; the soldier has no right to complain, nay murmur, if the general orders him into the cannon's mouth'. To another friend, 'Come Lord, come thou, the greatest teacher who has taught us that the soldier is only to obey and speak not. Come Lord, come!' In another letter, 'I have a call from above; I see no ways but his eyes see, and I must stick to my guns'.

The following extracts from his private letters clearly express his characteristic boldness:

'The wave has risen; nothing will be able to resist its tidal fury; do not be sorry, do not despond if I am slow in writing. The spirit, my boys, the spirit; the love, my children, the love; the faith, the belief and

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fear not, the greatest sin is fear'. In another part, 'Believe, believe, the decree has gone; the fiat of the Lord has gone—India must rise, the mass, the poor are to be made happy, and rejoice that you are the chosen instruments in His hands'.

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The Swami Vivekananda was a champion of mass education; he strongly believed that the mass is the soul, the centre of force of the nation; a nation whose mass is corrupt and degraded is sure to lag behind, and can not rise in the scale of nations at all; in his opinion, the mass should be elevated, noble ideas and thoughts should be introduced into it; noble ideals should be set before it to emulate. The Swamiji was eager to rouse the sleeping individuality in the mass.

The following extracts from a letter of his will clearly express his view on mass education: 'Remember the noble gist of our force—elevation of the masses without ignoring the religion at all; remember that the nation lives in the cottage, but alas! nobody ever did anything for them. The fate of a nation depends upon the condition of the masses. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit

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of equality, freedom, work and energy, at the same time Hindu to the backbone in religious culture and instincts? That is surely to be done, and we will do it; you are all born to do it. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward forever; sympathy for the poor, down-trodden, even unto death. This is our motto. Onward brave lads.'

In his letter to His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore, he has suggested some practical hints in imparting mass education; these hints are very practical, and ensure the success of his scheme of mass education. We give below an extract from his letter to the Maharaja:

'The only thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the conditions of the poor. The poor in the West are devils, ours are angels, and it is therefore so much the easier to raise our poor. The only thing to be done for our lower classes is to give them education to develop their lost individuality. That is the great task before our people and princes. Up to date nothing has been done in that direction. Priest-power, foreign conquest have trodden them for centuries under their feet, and at last the poor of India have forgotten they are human beings. They are to be given ideas. Their eyes are to be opened to see what is going on in the world around them, and they will work their own salvation. Every nation, every man, every woman must work one's own salvation. The only help they require is to give them ideas, and then the rest will follow as the effect. Our duty is to put ideas into their heads,

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they will do the rest. This is what is to be done in India. It was this idea that has been in my mind for a long time. I could not accomplish it in India, and that was the reason of my coming to this country.'

'The great difficulty of educating the poor is this. Supposing even your Highness opens a free school in every village, still it could do no good, for the poverty of India is such that the poor boys will rather go to help their fathers in the fields or otherwise try to make a living than come to the school. Now if mountain does not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain. If the poor boys cannot come to Education, Education must go to them. Now there are thousands of single minded self-sacrificing *Samnyasins* (mendicants) in our country going from village to village teaching religion. If a part of them be organised as teachers also of secular things, they will go from place to place, from door to door, not only preaching but teaching also. Suppose two of these men go to a village in the evening with a camera and a map &c.; they can teach a great deal of Astronomy and Geography to the ignorant, and also by telling stories about different nations and of the people of every country, they can give them hundred times more information through the ears than the poor can get in a life-time through books. Now this requires an organisation, which again means money. I have men enough in India to work for me; but alas! no money. It is greatly difficult to set a wheel in motion, and then it goes with accelerated velocity.'

'After seeking full help in my own country, and

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failing to get any sympathy from the rich I came over to this country through your Highness' help. My noble Prince! the life is short, the vanities of the world transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive. One such high, noble-minded, and royal son of India as your Highness, can put it on its feet again, and then leave a name to posterity which shall be worshipped as God. May the Lord make your noble heart feel intensely for the suffering millions of India sunk in ignorance, is the prayer of

Vivekananda.'

Swami Vivekananda discerned a canker that has been eating into the vitals of national progress; he saw that much energy is uselessly used up in the discussion of caste, that much energy which would otherwise have been of some service is uselessly dissipated and frittered away; he suggested that some noble ideas should be introduced into society. He writes to a friend, 'whether caste shall come or go I have nothing to do; my idea is to bring to the door of the meanest, the poorest, the noble ideas that the human race has developed both, in and out of India, and let them think for themselves; whether there should be no caste or not, whether women should be perfectly free or not, I have nothing to do. Liberty in thought and action is the only condition of life, growth and well-being; where it does not exist, the man, the race and the nation must go down; any clan, or caste, or nation or institution which bars the

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power of free thought and action of an individual, so long as it does not injure others, is devilish and must go down. My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of every body, and then men or women will settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers have thought, and other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see what others are doing, now especially, and let them decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation would be done by nature according to her laws.'

We do not wish to point out to our readers the intellectual attainments of Vivekananda. Dr. Wright, Professor of Greek in the Harvard University wrote, 'He is more learned than all of us together.' His masterly style of English and his eloquence have been spoken of, in terms of praise, by many leading organs of public opinion in England and America. His contribution to the Bengali literature is not to be overlooked. The editor of the *Sahitya* was so charmed at his article which we know was his first attempt, that he wrote, 'verily, genius is all-absorbing.'

His style was peculiarly his own. He often used to say that he would write in diction in which we express our ideas; he did not countenance the style of the *academical pharisees*. He wished to do away with the unnecessary ornamentation and useless flourish of rhetoric, bespeaking insincerity of heart. This will be manifest to us if we read his *Bartaman Bharat* or *Bilat Jatrir Patra*. His articles in *Bartaman Bharat* covering

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about seventy pages and in *Prachya O' Paschatya* are really marvels in the history of Bengali literature.

His style is marked by a harmonious blending of sombre and humorous tone. He is speaking very grandly, suddenly we are dazzled by some brilliant flashes of humour. His descriptions of Europe are characterised by faithful accuracy and consummate truthfulness.

His contributions to the Bengali literature are important from another point of view—their richness in allusions to past and contemporary history; and this very fact has rendered his articles unapproachable to ordinary readers. His *forte* lay in the comparative study of history. His eye of genius could discern at the root of ordinary incidents, elements of civilisation which are invisible to our grosser eyes.

The Swamiji had a happy knack of expressing himself clearly; he always aimed at this. In consequence of this, his expressions are remarkably clear, even sometimes bordering on direct attack.

His study of history was not desultory; for this, he began to learn French, of which he acquired a smattering knowledge. His knowledge of Sanskrit was not skin-deep; even on the day of his death he taught *Panini* and *Yajur Veda* for three hours. We have read several Sanskrit verses composed by him.

The three master minds of the last century Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Keshub Chunder Sen and the Swami Vivekananda resemble one another in their literary turn of mind. Raja Ram Mohan Ray is the father of

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Bengali prose; Keshub Chunder Sen brought about effective reforms in the Bengali literature, and the Swami Vivekananda only took the initiative to effect wholesome reforms in our literature when he was cut off in the prime of his life. What little service the Swamiji has rendered to our mother tongue is sure to be appraised at its true value by the future generation.

The style of Keshub Chunder Sen smells, as it were, of the sweet odour of incense offered to the deity, that of Vivekananda smells of gun-powder. Keshub strikes the lyre; Vivekananda blows the horn—but the sound emitted is not grating to the ear.

Keshub and Vivekananda had the same mission; they struck the same key-note, though they played on different instruments. Both, in the language of Carlyle had 'a soul like an Aeolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody.'

Vivekananda was more akin to Raja Ram Mohan Ray than to Keshub Chunder Sen. When we study the life of Raja Ram Mohan Ray we are awed and dazzled into admiration at the versatility of his genius; such versatility is rare in any country; we come across the same type of versatility in the life of Vivekananda.

The Swami Vivekananda, always in thought and action, strove hard to build the superstructure of India's salvation in which will reign for ever 'Equality, Fraternity and Liberty.' To quote his own words, 'Liberty of thought, and action is the only condition of life.' This thought dissipated the stores of his nerve-power, and

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brought on early decay and death. His life, like Milton's was enkindled with the 'hallowed fire of the altar of God.' It was this fire that consumed his life.

Men of Vivekananda's type are born in advance of the state of their countrymen; they are precursors to a new dawn, a new state which evolves out of their ideas.

Though Vivekananda is no more, his life will serve as a beacon-light to us struggling in the tempestuous fury of heavy surfs and black squalls of temptations, enabling us to weather out the storm successfully, and hence preventing us from being wrecks cast on the shores of ruin.

When we consider all the qualities that the Swami Vivekananda was endowed with, we are forced to exclaim with the poet,

'.....the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world: 'This was a man.'

appendix

THE CHICAGO ADDRESSES

- On Hinduism
- Response to Welcome
- A Poem
- Messages

on hinduism

(September, 19, 1893)

Three religions now stand in the world which have come down to us from time pre-historic—Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. All of them have received tremendous shocks, and all of them prove by their survival their internal strength. But while Judaism failed to absorb Christianity and was driven out of its place of birth by its all-conquering daughter, and while a handful of Parsis is all that now remains to tell the tale of their grand religion, sect after sect arose in India, seeming to shake the religion of the *Vedas* to its very depths, but like the waters of the seashore in a tremendous earthquake, this would recede for a while, only to return in an all-absorbing flood, a thousand times more vigorous, and when the tumult of the rush was over, these sects were all sucked in, absorbed and assimilated into the immense body of the mother faith.

All kinds of thought from the high spiritual flights of the *Vedanta* philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, down to the lowest

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ideas of idolatry, with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu religion.

Where then, the question arises, where is the common centre upon which all these widely diverging radii converge? Where is the common basis upon which all these seemingly hopeless contradictions rest? And this is the question I shall now attempt to answer.

The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the *Vedas*. They hold that the *Vedas* are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience, that a book can be without beginning or end. But by the *Vedas* no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons at different times. Just as the law of gravitation acted before its discovery by humanity and would continue to act if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations that exist between soul and soul, and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits, were there before our discovery of them, and would still remain, even if we forgot them.

The discoverers of these laws are called *Rishis*, and we honour them as perfected beings. I am glad to tell this audience that some of the very greatest of them were women.

Here it may be said that these laws as laws may be without end, but they must have had a beginning. Now the *Vedas* teach us that creation is without beginning

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or end. Science has proved to us that the sum-total of cosmic energy is always the same. Then, if there was a time when nothing existed, where was all this manifested energy? Some say it was in a potential form in God. In that case God is sometimes potential and sometimes kinetic, which would make Him mutable. Everything mutable is a compound, and everything compound must undergo that change which is called destruction. So God would die, which is absurd. Therefore there never was a time when there was no creation.

If I may be allowed to use a simile, creator and creation are two lines, without beginning and without end, running parallel to each other. God is power, an ever-active providence, under whom system after system is being evolved out of chaos, made to run for a time, and again destroyed. This is what the Hindu boy repeats every day with his *Guru*. *'This sun and this moon, the Lord has created, like the suns and moons of previous cycles.'* And this agrees with modern science.

Here I stand, and if I shut my eyes, and try to conceive of my own existence, 'I,' 'I,' 'I,'—what is the idea before me? The idea of a body. Am I, then, nothing but a combination of material substances? The *Vedas* declare, No. I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I shall not die. Here am I in this body, and when it fails I shall still go on living. Also I had a past. The soul was not created out of nothing. For creation means a

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combination, and that again means a certain future dissolution. Hence if the soul was created, it must also die. Therefore it was not created. Again, some are born happy, and enjoy perfect health, with beautiful bodies, mental vigour and all their wants supplied. Others are born miserable; some are without hands or feet; others again are idiots, and only drag out a wretched existence. Why, if they were all created, did a just and merciful God create one happy and the other unhappy, why was He so partial? Nor does it in the least mend matters to hold that those who are miserable in this life will be perfect in a future one. Why should a man be miserable, even here, in the reign of a just and merciful God? In the second place, this idea of the creator-God does not even attempt to assign any cause to the anomalies of creation, but simply postulates the cruel fiat of an all-powerful being. Thus on the face of it, it is unscientific. There must have been causes, then, before his birth, to make a man, after it, miserable or happy, and those causes were his own past actions.

Are not the tendencies of mind and body accounted for by aptitudes inherited from parents? Here are two parallel lines of existence—one that of mind, the other that of matter. If matter and its transformations sufficiently answer for all that we are, there can be no necessity to suppose the existence of a soul. But it cannot be proved that thought has been evolved out of matter, and if monism is philosophically inevitable, a spiritual monism is quite as logical and not less desirable

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than materialistic. But neither of these is necessary at this point.

We cannot deny that bodies acquire certain tendencies by heredity, but this refers only to the physical configuration, through which a particular tendency of the mind has to be manifested. The cause of such a particular tendency in that mind lies in its own past actions. And a soul with a certain tendency will by the laws of affinity take birth in that body which is the fittest instrument for the display of that tendency. This is in perfect accordance with science, for science wants to explain everything by habit, and habit is acquired through repetition. So it is necessary to assume repetition in order to explain the natural habits of a newborn soul. And since these habits have not been arrived at in this present life, they must have come down from past lives.

There is another suggestion. Taking all this for granted, how is it that I do not remember anything of my past life? This can easily be explained. I am now speaking English. It is not my mother-tongue. In fact no words of my mother-tongue are now present in my consciousness. But let me try for a moment to bring them up, and they rush in. This shows that consciousness is only the surface of the mental ocean, and that within its depths are stored up all our experiences. Only try and struggle. They will all come back, and you will be conscious even of your past lives.

This is direct and demonstrative evidence. Verification is the perfect proof of a theory, and here is

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the challenge thrown to the world by the *Rishis*: We have discovered the secret by which the very depths of the ocean of memory can be stirred up—try it and you will obtain the complete memory of your past lives. So then, the Hindu believes that he is a spirit.

‘Him the sword cannot pierce—Him the fire cannot burn—Him the water cannot melt—Him the air cannot dry.’ The Hindu believes that every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, though its centre is located in the body: and that death only means the change of this centre from one body to another. Nor is the soul bound by the conditions of matter. In its very essence, it is free, unbounded, holy, pure, and perfect. But somehow or other it finds itself bound down by matter, and thinks of itself as matter.

Why should the free, perfect and pure being be thus under the thralldom of matter?—is the next question. How can the perfect be deluded into the belief that he is imperfect? We have been told that Hindus shirk this question and say that it cannot be asked. Some thinkers want to answer it by positing one or more quasi-perfect beings, and use big scientific names to fill up the gap. But naming is not explaining. The question remains the same. How can the perfect become the quasi-perfect? How can the pure, the absolute, change even a microscopic particle of its nature? But the Hindu is sincere. He does not want to take shelter under sophistry. He is brave enough to face the question in a manly fashion. And his answer is, “I do not know how the perfect being, the soul, came to think of itself

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as imperfect, as joined to and conditioned by matter. But the fact is a fact for all that. It is a fact in every body's consciousness that he thinks of himself as the body.' He does not attempt to explain why it is so, why one is in the body. The answer, that it is the will of God, is no explanation. This is nothing more than what the Hindu says, 'I do not know.'

Well, then, the human soul is eternal and immortal, perfect and infinite, and death means only a change of centre from one body to another. The present is determined by our past actions, and the future by the present. The soul will go on evolving up or reverting back from birth to birth and death to death. But here is another question: Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foaming crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolled to and fro at the mercy of his own good and bad actions—a power-less, helpless wreck, in an ever-raging, ever-rushing, uncompromising current of cause and effect—a little moth placed under the wheel of causation, which rolls on crushing everything in its way, and waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea, yet such is the law of nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape?—was the cry that went up from the depths of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a *Vedic* sage, and he stood up before the world and in trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings: 'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres!'

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I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, and delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death again and again.' 'Children of immortal bliss!'—What a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss,—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye are divinities on earth. Sinners?—it is sin to call man so. It is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep! You are souls immortal, spirits free, and eternal and blessed. Ye are not matter. Ye are not bodies. Matter is your servant, not you its slaves.

Thus it is that the *Vedas* proclaim not a dreadful combination of unforgiving laws, not an endless prison of cause and effect, but that at the head of all these laws in and through every particle of matter and force, stands One, 'by whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain, and death stalks upon the earth.'

And what is His nature?

He is everywhere, the pure and formless One, the Almighty and the All-merciful. 'Thou art our Father. Thou art our Mother. Thou art our beloved Friend. Thou art the source of all strength. Give us strength. Thou art He that beareth the burdens of the universe: help me to bear the little burden of this life!' Thus sang the *Rishis* of the *Vedas*. And how are we to worship Him? Through love. 'He is to be worshipped

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as the one beloved, dearer than anything in this life or the next.'

This is the doctrine of love declared in the *Vedas*. Let us see how it is fully developed and preached by *Krishna*, whom the Hindus believe to have been God incarnate on earth.

He thought that a man ought to live in this world like a lotus-leaf, which grows in water but is never wet by the water; so a man ought to live in the world—his heart to God and his hand to work.

It is good to love God for the hope of reward in this world or the next, but it is better to love God for love's sake. And the prayer goes: 'Lord, I want neither wealth, nor children, nor learning. I will go through a hundred perils, if it be Thy will; but grant me only this, that I may love Thee without the hope of reward—unselfishly, love for love's own sake.' One of the disciples of *Krishna*, the then Emperor of India, was driven from his throne by his enemies and had to take shelter with his queen in a forest in the *Himalyas*. There one day the queen asked him how it was that he, the most virtuous of men, had to suffer so much misery? *Yudhisthira* answered: 'Behold, my queen, the *Himalayas*, how grand and beautiful they are! I love them. They do not give me anything. But my nature is to love the grand and the beautiful, and therefore do I love them. Similarly, I love the Lord. He is the source of all beauty, of all sublimity. He is the only object to be loved; my nature is to love Him, and therefore I love. I do not pray for anything; I do not ask for

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anything. Let Him place me wherever He likes. I must love Him for love's sake, I cannot trade in love.'

The *Vedas* teach that the soul is divine, only held under the bondage of matter, and that perfection will be reached when the bonds shall break. And the word they use for salvation therefore is *mukti*—freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery.

This bondage can only fall off through the mercy of God and this mercy comes to the pure. So purity is the condition of His mercy. How that mercy acts? He reveals Himself to the pure heart; and the pure and stainless man sees God, yea, even in this life. Then and then only, all the crookedness of the heart is made straight. Then all doubt ceases. Man is no longer the sport of the terrible laws of causation. This is the very centre, the very vital conception of Hinduism. The Hindu does not want to live on words and theories. If there are existences beyond the ordinary sensuous existence, he wants to come face to face with them. If there is a soul in him which is not matter, if there is an all-merciful universal Soul, he will go to Him direct. He must see Him—That alone can destroy all doubts. So the best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God, is: 'I have seen the soul: I have seen God.' And that is the only condition of perfection. The Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realising, not in believing, but in being and becoming.

Thus the whole object of their system is by constant

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struggle to become perfect, to become divine to reach God, and see God; and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect 'even as the Father in Heaven is perfect,' constitutes the religion of the Hindus.

And what becomes of a man when he attains perfection? He lives a life of bliss infinite. He enjoys infinite and perfect bliss,—having obtained God, the only thing in which man ought to find pleasure,—and enjoys that bliss with God. So far all the Hindus are agreed. This is the common religion of all the sects of India.

But then the question comes, perfection is absolute, and the absolute cannot be two or three. It cannot have any qualities. It cannot be an individual. And so when a soul becomes perfect and absolute, it must become one with *Brahman*, and realise the Lord only as the reality and perfection, of its own nature and existence,—Existence absolute, Knowledge absolute, and Bliss absolute. We have often and often read about this as the losing of individuality, and becoming a stock or a stone. 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound.'

I tell you it is nothing of the kind. If it is happiness to enjoy the consciousness of this small body, it must be greater happiness to enjoy the consciousness of two bodies, and so on, the measure of happiness increasing with the consciousness of an increasing number of bodies; hence the aim, the ultimate of happiness would be reached when it becomes a universal consciousness.

Therefore, to gain this infinite universal individuality, this miserable little prison-individuality must

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go. Then alone can death cease, when I am one with life; then alone can misery cease, when I am one with happiness itself; then alone can all errors cease, when I am one with knowledge itself; and this is the necessary scientific conclusion. Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one little continuously changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter, and *Advaitam* (unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counter-part, Soul.

Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as any science reached perfect unity, it would have to stop from further progress, because it had reached the goal. Thus Chemistry could progress no further if it once discovered that one element out of which all others could be made. Physics must stop if it were able to complete its service by discovering one energy of which all others were but manifestations, and the science of religion becomes perfect when it has discovered Him who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, One who is the only Soul of which all souls are but delusive manifestations. Thus was it through multiplicity and duality that the ultimate unity was reached. Religion can go no further. This is the goal of all knowledge, science upon science—again and again.

All science is bound to come to this conclusion in the long run. Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science to-day, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is

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now going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light, from the latest conclusions of science.

Descend we now from the aspirations of philosophy to the religion of the ignorant. At the very outset, I may tell you that there is no polytheism in India. In every temple, if one stands by and listens, one will find the worshippers applying all the attributes of God, including omnipresence, to the images. It is not polytheism, nor would the name henotheism explain the situation. 'The rose called by any other name would smell as sweet.' Names are not explanations.

I remember, as a boy, hearing a Christian missionary preach to a crowd in India. Among other sweet things, he was saying to them that, if he gave a blow to their idol with his stick, what could it do? One of his hearers sharply answered, 'If I abuse your God, what can He do?' 'You would be punished,' said the preacher, 'when you die.' 'So my idol will punish you when you die!' retorted the Hindu. 'The tree is known by its fruits. When I have seen amongst those who are called idolaters, men, the like of whom, in morality and spirituality and love, I have never seen anywhere, I stop and ask myself, 'Can sin beget holiness?'

Superstition is a great enemy of man, but bigotry is worse. Why does a Christian go to church? Why is the cross holy? Why is the face turned towards the sky in prayer? Why are there so many images in the Catholic Church? Why are there so many images in the minds of Protestants when they pray? My brethren, we can no more think about anything without a mental

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image, than we can live without breathing. By the law of association, the material image calls up the mental idea, and *vice versa*. This is why the Hindu uses an external symbol when he worships. He will tell you it helps to keep his mind fixed on the Being to whom he prays. He knows as well as you do that the image is not God, is not omnipresent. After all, how much does omnipresence mean to most men, to almost the whole world in fact? It stands merely as a word, a symbol. Has God superficial area? If not, when we repeat the word omnipresent we think of the extended sky or of space, that is all.

As we find that somehow or other, by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea; so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, mosque or a cross. The Hindus have associated holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms. But with this difference, while some people devote their whole lives to their idol of a church and never rise higher, because with them religion means an intellectual assent to certain doctrines, and doing good to their fellows,—the whole religion of the Hindu is centred in realisation. Man is to become divine by realising the divine. Idols, or temples, or churches, or books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood: but on and on he must progress.

He must not stop anywhere. '*External worship, material worship*', say the *Vedas*, '*is the lowest stage*;

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struggling to rise, mental prayer is the next stage; but the highest stage is when the Lord has been realised. Mark, the same earnest man who is kneeling before the idol tells you: *'Him the sun cannot express, nor the moon, nor the stars. The lightning cannot express Him, nor what we speak of as fire. Through Him do all these shine.'* But he does not abuse anyone's idol or call its worship sin. He recognises in it a necessary stage of life. *'The child is the father of the man.'* Would it be right for an old man to say that childhood is a sin or youth a sin?

Nor is the use of images compulsory in Hinduism. Only, if a man can realise his divine nature more easily with the help of an image, would it be right to call that a sin? Nor even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error. To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth. To him, all religions, from the lowest fetichism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association. Each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength, till it reaches the Glorious Sun.

Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognised it. Every other religion lays down certain fixed dogmas, and tries to force the whole of the society to adopt them. They place before society one coat, which must fit Jack and John and Henry, all

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alike. If it should happen not to fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover his body. The Hindus have discovered that the Absolute can only be realised, or thought of, or stated, through the relative, and that images, crosses and crescents are simply so many symbols,—so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on. It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but it is so for many, and those who do not need it themselves, have no right to say that it is wrong.

One thing I must tell you. Idolatry does not mean in India anything horrible. It is not the mother of harlots. On the other hand, it is the attempt of undeveloped minds to grasp high spiritual truths. The Hindus have their faults, they sometimes have their exceptions; but mark this, they are always for punishing their own bodies, and never for cutting the throats of their neighbours. If the Hindu fanatic burns himself on the pyre, he never lights the fire of Inquisition. And even this cannot be laid at the door of his religion any more than the burning of witches can be laid at the door of Christianity.

To the Hindu, then, the whole world of religion is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only an evolving of God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them. Why, then, are there so many contradictions? They are only apparent, says the Hindu. The contradictions come from the same truth

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adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures.

It is the same light coming through glasses of different colour. And these little variations are necessary for purpose of adaptation. But in the heart of everything the same truth reigns. The Lord has declared to the Hindu in his incarnation as *Krishna*, '*I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power, raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there.*' And what has been the result? I challenge the world to find, throughout the whole system of Sanskrit Philosophy, any such statement as that the Hindu alone will be saved and not others. Says *Vyasa*, '*We find perfect men even beyond the pale of our own caste and creed.*' One thing more. How, then, can the Hindu, whose whole fabric of thought centres in God, believe in Buddhism, which is agnostic, or in Jainism, which is atheistic?

The Buddhists and Jains do not depend upon God; but all the same the whole force of their religion is directed to that great central truth of every religion, the evolving of God out of man. They have not seen the Father, but they have seen the Son. And he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also.

This, brethren, is a short sketch of the religious ideas of the Hindus. The Hindu may have failed to carry out all his plans, but if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which holds no location in place or time; which is infinite, like the God it

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preaches, whose sun shines upon the followers of *Krishna* and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; nor Brahmanic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mahommedan, but the sum-total of all these, yet still keeping infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, and making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intoleration in its polity, which will recognise divinity in every man and woman, whose whole scope, whose whole force will be centred in aiding humanity to realise its own true and divine nature.

Offer such a religion, and all the nations will follow you. Asoka's council was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's though more to the purpose, was only a parlour-meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all the quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every faith.

May He, who is the *Brahman* of the Hindus, the *Ahura-Mazda* of the Zoroastrians, the *Buddha* of the Buddhists, the *Jehovah* of the Jews, and the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea. The star arose in the East; it travelled steadily towards the West, sometimes dimmed and sometimes effulgent, till it made a circuit of the world, and now it is again rising on the very horizon

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of the East, the borders of the *Tasifu*, a thousand-fold more effulgent than ever it was before.

Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who hast never dipped thine hand in thy neighbour's blood, who hast never found out that the shortest way to become rich was to rob one's neighbours; it has been given to thee to march onwards, in the vanguard of civilization carrying the flag of harmony.

response to welcome

(September 11, 1893)

Sisters and Brothers of America,

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of the Hindu people, of all classes and sects.

My thanks, also, to some of the speakers on this platform, who, referring to the delegates from the Orient, have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honour of bearing to different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. Not only do we believe in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to tell you that I belong to a religion into whose sacred language, the Sanskrit, the word *exclusion* is untranslatable. I am proud to belong to a nation

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which has sheltered the refugees and the persecuted of all the religions and all the nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered into our bosom the purest remnant of the *Israelites*, a remnant that came to Southern India, and took refuge with us, in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered, and is still fostering, the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, a hymn which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: *'As different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their waters in the sea, so, O Lord, do the different paths which men through their different tendencies take, various though they appear, crooked and straight alike, all lead to Thee.'*

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world, of the wonderful doctrine preached in the *Gita*: *'Whosoever comes to Me, by whatsoever form, him do I reach. All men are struggling along paths which lead in the end to Me.'* Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled it with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilizations and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would by this time have been far more advanced than it now is. But their

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time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that rang this morning in honour of this convention may prove the death-knell to all fanaticism, to all persecutions by sword or pen, and to all uncharitable feelings between human beings wending their way to the same goal.

a poem

Listen, Friend, I will speak heart to thee,
I have found in my life this truth supreme,—
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,
There's one ferry that takes across the sea,—
Formulas of worship, control of breath,
Science, Philosophy, systems varied,
Relinquishment, Possession, and the like,
All these are but delusions of the mind;—
Love, love,—that's the one thing, the sole treasure,
Aye, born heir to the infinite thou art,
Within the heart is the ocean of love,
'Give, Give away,'—whoever asks return,
His ocean dwindles down to a mere drop.
From highest *brahman* to the yonder worm,
And to the very minutest atom,
Everywhere is the same God, the all-love;
Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.
These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings, without distinction,
He, indeed, is worshipping best his God.

—VIVEKANANDA.

messages

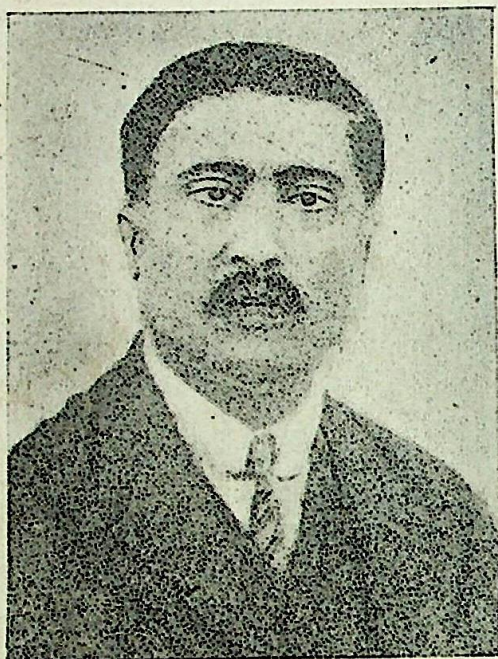
'Human society is in turn governed by the four castes—the priests, the soldiers, the traders, and the labourers.....Last will come the labourer (Shudra) rule. Its advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts—its disadvantages, (perhaps) the lowering of culture. There will be a great distribution of ordinary culture, but extraordinary geniuses will be less and less.'

'We have to find our way between the Scylla of old superstitions and orthodoxy and the Charybdis of materialism—of Europeanism, of soullessness, of the so-called reform....These two have to be taken care of. In the first place, we cannot become Westerners; therefore imitating the Westerners is useless....in the second place, it is impossible.....'

'Though our castes and our institutions are apparently linked with our religion, they are not so.'

The caste system is opposed to the religion of the Vedanta. Caste is a social custom, and all our great preachers have tried to break it down.'

—*Vivekananda.*



Manomohan Ganguly.

(1882—1926)

Manomohan Ganguly, B.E., M.R.A.S., archæologist, engineer and scholar was born in 1882. He was noted for his vast researches and original contributions in archæology and wrote his famous book: "Orissa And Her Remains—Ancient & Mediæval" in 1912 which is an original contribution on the history and architecture-pattern of ancient and mediæval Orissa. Other books written by him are: *Sruti-Smriti*, *Sthapatya Silper Bhumika*, *Orissar Sthapatya*, *Swami Vivekananda*,—A Study, and a hand book of Sculpture in the Sahitya Parisad Museum etc.

In addition to his works on archæology, he contributed many papers and articles both in English and Bengali on numerous subjects like iconography, science, literature, travels and other humanities in various journals of his time such as *Asiatic Society Journal*, *Bihar & Orissa Research Society Journal*, *Maha Bodhi Journal*, *Udbodhan*, *Sahitya*, *Narayan*, *Modern Review*, *Prabashi* etc. He was intimately connected with the works and organisation of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad and organised the Parishad Museum and Chitrasala on a scientific basis and played a leading part in the activities of the Parishad and Mahabodhi Society of India, Ramkrishna Mission, National Council of Education, Bengal, Bengal Buddhist Association and a host of other cultural and public organisations of repute during his life time. His life and character were greatly influenced by Swami Vivekananda, Swami Bramhananda, Swami Sivananda, Bramha Bandhav Upadhyaya and Sri Aurobindo with all of whom he came in close relationship during his early youth.

A noted scholar in Sanskrit, he was awarded the honorary title of Pandit, Vidyaratna, etc. for his erudition in Vedanta and other philosophies and Indian Sculptures.

He died at an early age of 43 on 13th January, 1926, leaving his works unfinished, numerous manuscripts unpublished, which when published, will surely enrich our stores of knowledge.